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June's Jottings: March 1, 2017

March 3, 2017

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:15-17 NRSV)

I have been reflecting on my time in the Southeast Conference and am so grateful for all the lessons learned and the memories I will carry with me from this place. I am headed, after Easter, to do a local church interim at Zion's Reformed Church in Greenville, Pennsylvania. Those who wish to stay in touch can contact me at revjuneb@gmail.com.

The last few weeks have been a time of the circle coming round full. In February 2014 Randy Hyvonen called me while I was driving to Atlanta to let me know that a tornado had severely damaged the roof of Beloved Community Church in Birmingham. I began my ministry among you by talking with pastors and insurance adjusters from the road. On February 12, 2017 I was with Beloved Community Church to install their new pastor, Jennifer Sanders. I acknowledged that journey with them from challenge to celebration.

The first weekend of my ministry here, I attended the Alabama Tennessee Association meeting. At the close of that meeting, I followed Debbie Douglas from Birmingham to Belvidere (a very long drive) to attend the Men's Fellowship Fish Fry and preach on Sunday. Sunday, March 5 is my last official day in the Southeast Conference and I will be in Belvidere,

Tennessee to install their new pastor, Jan Whiteman.

There are many other wonderful Holy Spirit stories that I could share if space allowed. Please know that I have been blessed beyond measure by the warmth, welcome, and respect you have shown me during my tenure here. There were also times of stress and challenge, but the blessing always outweighs the burden and so I hope that I leave here having been a blessing to the members and churches of this Conference.

Some of you were present at the special meeting called to elect me to this office. You will remember that I shared my history by a display of various cups that were associated with my racial/ethnic heritage and my varied ministry settings. I will leave here with several new cups in my collection. You may also recall that I closed my presentation with the chalice from the 2013 General Synod held in Long Beach, California where I served on the local arrangements committee. And I reminded us all that this cup is the only one we need pay attention to for it is the cup poured out for us by Divine Love that we might have life and have it abundantly.

I leave you with the promise that you will all remain in my heart and my prayers. And I share with you a verse of one of my favorite hymns, *One Bread, One Body* (John B. Foley, 1978), as a reminder of how we are all connected across good boundaries and despite distance.

One bread, one body, one Lord of all,
one cup of blessing which we bless.
And we, though many, throughout the earth,
we are one body in this one Lord.

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